

# Memorandum

**To:** Matt Dias, Acting Executive Officer,  
Board of Forestry and Fire Protection

Gabriel Schultz, Northern Region Staff Chief  
Scott Upton, LNU Chief

**Date:** December 2, 2015

**Telephone:** (707) 928-4378

**Website:** [www.fire.ca.gov](http://www.fire.ca.gov)

**From:** Dave Loveless, State Forest Program Manager  
Nicholas Kent, Manager – Boggs Mountain Demonstration State Forest

**Subject:** Boggs Mountain Demonstration State Forest, Initial Study and Management Plan Update

Board of Forestry (Board) Policy, Section 0351.10, regarding Demonstration State Forest management plans states:

*“Management plans for Boggs Mountain, Jackson, Latour, Mountain Home and Soquel Demonstration State Forests shall be prepared by the Department, with appropriate public review, for approval by the Board. The Department shall present to the Board a thorough review of each existing plan at least every five years. After each review, the Board may direct the Department either to continue management under the existing plan, to prepare amendments to the plan, or to prepare a new plan for public review and Board approval. The Department shall submit the requested amendments or plan to the Board within one year after each request. The Department shall continue management under existing plans with appropriate consideration for changes in law or regulation, until amendments or new plans are approved by the Board.”*

CAL FIRE has primary authority for carrying out the proposed Boggs Mountain Demonstration State Forest (BMDSF) 2015 Management Plan project and the Board is the lead agency under CEQA. The purpose of the Initial Study is to present to the public the environmental consequences of implementing the proposed project and describe the adjustments made to the project to avoid significant environmental effects or reduce them to a less-than-significant level.

On September 10, 2015, a draft Initial Study for BMDSF was completed in preparation for review by the Board and prior to posting for public review and comment through the State Clearinghouse. As you are aware, on Saturday, September 12, 2015, at approximately 1:24 in the afternoon, the Valley Fire started near BMDSF and quickly engulfed the entire State Forest as well as much of the surrounding community, including Middletown some 10 miles to the south. While the Forest Headquarters and the adjacent Helitack Base survived the fire intact, the infrastructure supporting the facilities, including electrical powerlines and the community water system were heavily damaged. In addition to the infrastructure, it is estimated that 80 to 90 percent of the standing trees on BMDSF were either killed or substantially damaged by the intensity of the fire, amounting to over 62 million board feet of timber lost in the fire.

In addition to the damage sustained to the infrastructure and timber stands, the fire significantly altered the entire vegetation component, campgrounds and trail system, erosion potential and recreational facilities and opportunities. While BMDSF has traditionally been heavily used for recreational purposes by the local community and other visitors, due to the current life threatening conditions on the forest as a result of the fire, the Forest has been temporarily closed to the public until such time as these life safety issues can be mitigated.

As a result of the fire, significant modifications to the Management Plan will be required to address the fire's impacts and current forest conditions, and the new rehabilitation, recreation and research plans for the Forest. In addition, and as originally planned, the approximately 20 recommendations provided by the Management Committee at the July, 2015 Board meeting held in Cobb will be addressed and incorporated into the new Management Plan.

Similarly, the draft Initial Study was prepared to evaluate a Forest Management Plan and community that have since been inextricably altered as a result of the fire. Given the modified environment and infrastructure that now comprises both BMDSF and the surrounding community, the Initial Study will also require substantial revisions to accurately describe and assess the current conditions, to evaluate potential environmental effects as a result of the proposed project, and to develop mitigations, if necessary, to reduce them to a less-than-significant level.

Given the current concerted effort and focus on environmental mitigation and rehabilitation, it is anticipated that the new Management Plan and Initial Study will not be available for Board review until late summer of 2016. In the meantime, State Forest and Program staff will continue to keep the Board apprised of activities and progress on BMDSF. To that end, the following is a synopsis of the projects, research and public outreach that have taken place or are being implemented on the forest since the fire.

State Forest and Program Staff, along with the help of others, including California Geological Survey and other CAL FIRE personnel, have been working diligently to implement a rehabilitation plan that has been designed to reduce the fuel loading, revegetate the forest, reduce the erosion potential and to provide for public input and outreach in the process. Numerous contracts have been prepared in order to conduct salvage operations and to implement road improvement and erosion control projects. Plans have also been developed and are being implemented to take advantage of this unanticipated opportunity to conduct relevant and applicable research in areas including site preparation techniques, erosion impacts and erosion control, reforestation and carbon sequestration. More specifically, the following activities have occurred to-date:

- A request for the approval of emergency contracts for the harvest of dead trees and associated work was submitted for Boggs Mountain State Forest due to extensive tree mortality resulting from the Valley Fire. The request is based on Governor Brown's October 30, 2015, proclamation that a STATE OF EMERGENCY exists within the State of California due to the severe drought across California which worsens wildfire risk across large regions of the State, life safety risks from falling trees to Californians living in impacted rural, forested communities, and worsens the threat of erosion across watersheds; and such wildfires will release thousands of tons of greenhouse gas emissions and other harmful air pollutants.

- Since October 5, rotating groups of two to four CAL FIRE Foresters, Assistant IIs, and Forestry Aides have worked at BMDSF on the fire salvage preparation effort.
- Four Timber Sales totaling 2,220 acres of the 3,493 acres of the Forests were advertised and sold on November 4, 2015. The total estimated net volume of these four sales is 36,830 MBF.
- Forest Manager Nick Kent prepared an Emergency Notice, pursuant to the Forest Practice Rules (14 CCR § 929, 945, and 1052) for the salvage operations.
- CAL FIRE Archaeologist Chuck Whatford has been working with Sonoma State University Archaeologists, under contract with CAL FIRE, to relocate and flag archaeological sites.
- Forest Manager Nick Kent gave a presentation to the Friends of Boggs Mountain at a special meeting held at Cobb Elementary School on October 10 to inform this primary user group about the status of the Forest, the rehabilitation plan including salvage logging, road work, research, and other stabilization measures, and a future re-opening date.
- Friends of Boggs Mountain have obtained a \$10,000.00 grant from REI to help rehabilitate Boggs Mountain State Forest recreational facilities.
- Laurel Harkness of the International Mountain Bicycling Association has offered to help with assessing and redesigning the trails system.
- Forest Manager Nick Kent and Division Chief Jim Wright gave a slide presentation and talk on prescribed burning to the Pepperwood Foundation near Calistoga on September 29.
- Forest Manager Nick Kent gave a video interview to the Lake County News on October 21st on the forest describing the effects of the burn and rehabilitation efforts.
- Forest Manager Nick Kent and Fire Captains Joe Fletcher and Emily Smith of Lake-Napa Unit spoke to a group of 100 students visiting from Willits Middle School on October 29, and gave them a synopsis of the effects of the fire and the rehabilitation efforts underway.
- Forest Manager Nick Kent and CGS Geologist Don Lindsay gave a half day tour on November 18 to a group of twenty five organized by RPF Fred Euphrat including Santa Rosa JC Forestry Students, members of the Sonoma Land Trust, employees of the Jenner Headlands Management Group, a UCCE forester, and State Park ecologists.
- A research group meeting was organized by CAL FIRE Assistant Deputy Director Helge Eng on November 10 and the group toured the Forest. Attendees included UCCE (Bill Stewart), UCB (Rob York), FRAP (Dave Sapsis, Tadashi Moody, Chris Keithley, Dave Passovoy), USFS PSW Research Station (Martin Richey, Brandon Collins), CGS (Don Lindsay), and CAL FIRE (Tom Smith, Dave Loveless, Nick Kent, Helge Eng, Drew Coe). On-going research and potential projects were discussed.

- A number of research efforts are currently underway including:
  - Dead and Dying Tree Assessments using Tree Note 33 by CAL FIRE Pathologist Chris Lee;
  - Post-fire Erosion Effects Studies by CAL FIRE Hydrologists Pete Cafferata and Drew Coe, CGS Geologist Don Lindsay, and Hydrologist Joe Wagenbrenner from Michigan Tech. The study is designed to evaluate the effects of the wildfire on hydrologic processes, erosion and sediment transport, potential mitigations for post-fire runoff and erosion, and the effects of post-fire management;
  - Wildlife Habitat Impacts Post-fire by CAL FIRE Biologist Stacy Stanish;
  - Annosus Root Disease and Black Oak Study by Chris Lee;
  - Continuous Forest Inventory and Monitoring of Post-fire Effects by State Forests Biometrician Jeff Leddy;
  - Long-term Forest Structure Monitoring Control Plots by State Forest Staff;
  - Post-fire Forest Stand Development Comparing Site Preparation Treatments by FRAP and UCB Staff. The proposed treatments include five replicates of the following:
    1. Control – No salvage
    2. Salvage/no site prep, plant 170-200 TPA
    3. Salvage/ standard site prep spray/pile/burn/plant 170-200 TPA
    4. Salvage/ standard site prep spray/pile/burn/rip plant 170-200 TPA

The following is a list of the current contracts either prepared or in preparation for the rehabilitation effort on BMDSF. While the salvage contracts for the removal of the dead and dying trees are the primary contracts, all of these contracts are interrelated and essential in order to allow the fuel reduction (tree removal salvage operations) to occur, in compliance with the Forest Practice Rules, and to mitigate the threat of wildfire, soil erosion and greenhouse gas emissions.

- Boggs Mountain 2015 Salvage Timber Sales (Multiple Units and Contracts)
- Boggs 2015 Rock Crushing
- Boggs 2015 Road Work Unit #A1
- Boggs 2015 Road Work Unit #B1
- Check Scale For Boggs Mountain 2015 Salvage Timber Sales
- Boggs DSF 2015/16 Tree Seedlings
- Boggs Site Preparation
- Boggs Revegetation/Tree Planting